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KHASI KINSHIP AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

BY

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Introduction

In a paper on Khasi marriage rules Prof. Hodson has tried to explain the special features of the Khasi kinship terms and marriage rules on the hypothesis of a former dual division of Khasi Society, and certain new social forms which came into operation when the dual society broke up (1).

Hodson used for his work, the kinship terms noted in the Assam Census Report (2), Gurdon's work on Khasis (3) and a dictionary by U. Nissiewing. A full list of Khasi kinship terms was published by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy shortly afterwards (4). The list is stated to have been compiled with the help of the ex-Siem of Cherra, on the genealogical method. The genealogies have not however been printed, and detailed notes are not available.

Recently the writer of this paper proceeded to the village of Mawphlang, the head-quarters of the Khasi State of this name and collected a certain amount of data to discuss this problem. The village is situated to the south-west of Shillong, at a distance of sixteen miles, and has preserved the old customs to a fair extent. It is ruled over by a lyngdoh or priest-chief, assisted by four myntris. At the time of the visit, the lyngdoh was away, suspended by the Political Agent for misgovernment, and the powers of the State were vested in the council of myntris. The senior myntri U Bobo Rai, who is an old man

[This paper was first presented in M.S. by Hodson to Anthrop. S.]

nearly seventy years of age, spoke English a little, and kindly agreed to help by acting as introducer as well as interpreter. The Chowkidar of the bungalow, a Christian Khasi who spoke Hindi tolerably well was however our principal interpreter. Before proceeding to the village, I had studied Roberts' Khasi Grammar and also learnt simple sentences in Khasi necessary for collecting genealogies, kinship terms and connected details, like the inheritance of the ancestral house and lands. This portion of the data was collected entirely through questions and answers in Khasi; the other details were obtained with the help of myatri U Subu Rai and his friends and the Chowkidar, U Hodrington. On important points however, some checking was made, by simple questions in Khasi, which involved definite answers in the affirmative or negative. My students who had accompanied me for training in field studies, repeated some of my observations, in my presence and with my help and guidance.

My best thanks are due to Mr. E. Castle, Deputy Commissioner, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, for furnishing me with the letter of introduction to U Subu Rai and for other facilities. His published notes on Khasi law, especially the chapters on inheritance also proved to be of great value in carrying out the enquiries (I). In the subsequent portions of this article, references to the works of Gurdon and Castle, will be indicated merely by (G) and (C) respectively.

CHAPTER I

According to traditions preserved by the local people, the Iangtieh clan were the first settlers in Mawphlang. The Lyngkhe were invited to come and settle as the Iangtieh wanted priests to perform proper worship for their village. Other clans came later and settled in the State. These old clans are known as Khadar Kur. Myntris are elected from the following four clans—Iangtieh, Khar Shiing, Khar Nonsi and Khar Sohlia. The above traditions of the origin of the settlement were furnished by the myntri U Sohn Bai, his sister's husband U Alimon and others. The list of Khadar Kur furnished by the myntri is noted below :—

(1) Iangtieh.	(2) Lyngkhe.	(3) Khar Shiing.
(4) Khar Nonsi	(5) Khar Sohlia.	(6) Khar Phoonap.
(7) Khar Kynsie.	(8) Khar Sohkhar.	(9) Marbaniang.
(10) Khar Nartiang.	(11) Khar Mawphlang.	(12) Khar Syntiew.

The genealogy of myntri U Sohn Bai, of myntri U Ormug Singh and others are shown at the end of this chapter. In collecting kinship terms, three questions were asked of the informant :

(i). What is the relationship of B to the informant A (and of A to B). This is shown in the tables as the kinship term.

(ii). What the informant A called B (and conversely). This is shown in the tables as the term of address.

(iii). How the informant A referred to the relationship of B to C, another relative. This is shown as the term of reference.

Generally the terms for (i) and (iii) are the same. In a few instances a distinction was said to be made. Many people however do not observe such distinctions. In the list of kinship terms published by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, this distinction has not been made. While his list agrees with mine in many respects, there are important differences. He has noted certain identities in kinship terms, which I did not find, and which have not been noted also in the Census Report.

The kinship system of the Khasis has certain special features:

(a) There is a clear distinction drawn in the kinship terms, with regard to seniority and juniority in age between siblings. This distinction is also made in the generation above that of the speaker, with regard to the mother's sisters, and father's brothers and their spouses. It is also observed with regard to the mother's brothers but not with regard to the father's sisters or the spouses, or their children. The distinction is however observed throughout in terms of address.

(b) A woman refers to her sister's children by the same term as a man to his brother's children; but a woman refers to her brother's children by a different term, which is applied also by her brother to her children.

(c) Certain kin are grouped together. The same term, for example is applied to the mother, step mother, the mother's sisters, and the wives of the brothers of the father. Similarly, the father, the step father, the father's brothers and the husbands of the mother's sisters are grouped together. In both cases, the actual father and mother are referred to by a term, to which adjectives denoting seniority and juniority are added for the other relatives. The mother's brother and the father's sister's husband have a common term. But the mother's brother is always distinguished by adding the adjective of age noting his position as elder or younger uncle. The father's sister's husband is not so distinguished. The sister of the father is clearly distinguished

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from the wife of mother's brother by a term denoting relationship through the father. The mother's brother's wife was stated by my informants in Mawphlang not to be denoted by the term "Kha" or "Kain Kha" which was applied only to the father's sister. She was merely Kain. 601

(d) A man and his wife applied to the brothers and sisters of the spouse, with one exception the same terms (with a term added to qualify) of relationship as for own brothers and sisters. This practice is extended also to the children of these relatives. The exception occurs with regard to the term used by a man towards his sister's husband, and by the latter to him. It is a single special term, the distinction extending to the term of address. In the other cases, the qualifying term even is dropped in address and no distinction is then made between a sister and the wife's sister, or a brother and the husband's brother.

In order to appreciate the significance of features of Khasi Kinship, it is necessary to note in brief, the rules of descent, inheritance, and succession among the Khasis. An excellent summary of these have been given by Gurdon. The rules of inheritance and land tenure have been further elucidated by Cantlie and others in the work already mentioned. I shall illustrate essential points in the next chapter with reference to the genealogies included in this paper, and also note certain additional details which were observed by me. 601 611

Abbreviations used in the kinship table are those employed in an earlier paper. They are noted below :—

F—father	M—mother	B—brother
S—sister	S—son	D—daughter
H—husband	W—wife	C—child
e—elder	y—younger	e—elder
e e—same speaking	e e—woman speaking	

The prefixes U and Ka have not been noted in the case of most of the kinship terms as superfluous.

60! In the genealogies Ka before a name denotes a woman, and C, a man. Hence no special symbols have been used to distinguish sex. Abbreviations used are :—

[128] d.—dead. s.s.—not remembered. s.k.—not known.
d.y.—died young. num.—numerous. s.l.—no issue.

Unless the village of birth is stated to be otherwise, it is Mawphlang.

Relationship	Kinship term	Term of address	Name of relative
F.	U Kpa	I Kpa or Ka Kpa	— Sa
M.	U Khun	Ka Khun	—
B.	Ka Khun	Ka Khun	—
Si.	I Sni	I Sni	Ka Kmie Ki
Si. o. b.	Sni Kur	Ka Sni kur	Ka Kmie Kur
Si. y. b.	Sni Nah	Ka Sni Nah	Ka Kmie Nah
p. f. o. (m. s.)	Khun Bnih	Ka Khun Bnih	—
o. f. b. (m. s.)	Khun Bnih	Ka Khun Bnih	—
p. f. y. (m. s.)	"	"	—
o. f. y. (m. s.)	"	"	—
Si. o. s.	Ka Jaughati	I Ka Jaughati	U Kni ki
Si. y. s.	Ka Khynnah	I Ka Khynnah	U Kni
p. f. s. (m. s.)	Kynn	Ka Kynn	—
o. f. s. (m. s.)	Kynn	Ka Kynn	—
p. f. d. (m. s.)	"	"	—
o. f. d. (m. s.)	"	"	—
Si. o. s. W.	I Ma	Ka Ma	Ma
Si. o. s.	Kynn	Ka Kynn	—
Si. y. s.	"	"	—
Si. o. d.	"	"	—
Si. y. d.	"	"	—
Si. o. Si.	Ka Kni	Ka Ka Kni	—

Relationship	Reciprocal term	Term of address	Term of reference
M.F.S.D.	Fa. Elder brother or Fa. Sister	Elder Fa. Elder brother or Elder Fa. Sister	—
M.F.S.S.	Younger Sister	Elder Younger Sister	—
M.M.S.	"	"	—
M.M.S.D.	"	"	—
M.M.S.S.	"	"	—
F.M.	Fa. Sister.	Elder Fa. Sister.	—
F.F.S.	Fa. Elder brother.	Elder Fa. Elder brother.	—
F.F.S.S. (man.)	Younger Brother.	Fa. Younger Brother.	—
F.F.S.S. (woman.)	"	"	—
F.F.S.D. (man.)	"	"	—
F.F.S.D. (woman.)	"	"	—
F.M.S.W.	Elder Sister.	Elder Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.
F.F.S.W.	Elder Sister.	Elder Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.
F.F.S.S.	Younger Sister.	Elder Younger Sister.	—
F.M.S.D.	"	"	—
F.M.S.S.	"	"	—
F.F.S.D.	"	"	—
F.M.	Father.	Elder Father.	— (1)
F.F.	Father.	Elder Father.	—
F.F.S.S. (man.)	Cousin.	Elder Cousin.	—
F.F.S.S. (woman.)	"	"	—
F.M.S.D. (man.)	"	"	—
F.M.S.D. (woman.)	"	"	—
F.F.S.D.	Niece.	Elder Niece.	— (2)
F.M.S.S.	Cousin.	Elder Cousin.	—
F.M.S.D.	"	"	—
M.	F. Sister.	Elder Sister.	F. Sister. (2)
M.	Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.
M.	F. Sister.	Elder Sister.	F. Sister.
M.	Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.	Elder Sister.

Relationship.	Family name.	Name of address.	Name of reference.
W.S.D. [illegible]	Duli.	Su Duli.	—
S.S. [illegible]	Pare.	Su Dap.	—
S.D. [illegible]	Dang.	Su Dang.	—
S.D. [illegible]	Dare.	Su Dap.	—
S.S. [illegible]	Dari Dia.	Su Dali.	—
W.S.S. [illegible]	"	Su Dap.	—
W.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dang.	—
W.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dap.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	Duli Dia.	Su Dali.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	Duli Dia.	Su Dap.	—
S.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dang.	—
S.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dap.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	Pare Dia.	Su Dali.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	"	Su Dap.	—
S.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dang.	—
S.S.D. [illegible]	"	Su Dap.	—
W.	Su Dap.	Su Dare Si Dia.	—
S.	S Dap.	S Dja Si Dia.	—
W.S.S.	Pare Djuai.	Su Dap.	—
W.S.S.	Djuaaaa Djuai.	Su Dang.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	Djuaaaa Djuai.	Su Dang.	—
S.S.S. [illegible]	Pare Djuai.	Su Dap.	—
W.S.	Djuaaaa.	Su Tia.	—
S.S. [illegible]	Djuaaaa.	Su Tia.	—
W.S.S.	Pare Djuai.	Su Dap.	—
W.S.S.	Djuaaaa Djuai.	Su Dang.	—
S.S.S.	Djuaaaa Djuai.	S Dap.	—
S.S.S.	Pare Djuai.	Su Dap.	—
W.S.S.	Ka Pare Dang Dia.	Su Dap.	Pare Dang Dia.
W.S.S.	Ka Djuaaaa Dang Dia.	Su Dali.	Djuaaaa Dang Dia.

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Relationship.	Kinship term.	Term of address.	Term of reference.
[illegible]	Pere Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
o.B.W. (m.s.)	Kinsman Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Kinsman Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
y.B.W. (m.s.)	Pere Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Pere Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
o.B.W. (m.s.)	Kinsman Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Kinsman Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
y.B.W. (m.s.)	Pere Kinsi.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Ke Pere Sheng Kin.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Ke Kinsman Sheng Kin.	Ke Sing.	—
[illegible]	Ke Kinsi.	Ke Kinsi.	Ke Kinsi Kinin. (k)
[illegible]	"	"	"
[illegible]	T Kinsi.	Ke Kinsi.	T Kinsi Kinin.
[illegible]	"	"	"
[illegible]	Ke Pere Kinin.	Ke Pere.	Ke pere Kinin. (l)
[illegible]	T Pere Kinin.	Ke Pere.	T Pere Kinin.
[illegible]	Pere Kere Sheng Kin.	Ke Sing. Ke Sing.	— (l)
[illegible]	"	According to age.	—
[illegible]	Pere Kin Sheng Kin.	"	—
[illegible]	"	"	—
[illegible]	Ke Mokol or Mei Sing.	Ke Mokol or Ke Mei Sing.	Ke Kere Kinsman.
[illegible]	T Pokol or T Ke Sing.	Ke Pokol or Ke Ke Sing.	T Ke Kinsman.
[illegible]	T Pokol or T Ke Sing.	Ke Pokol or Ke Ke Sing.	T Ke Kinsman.
[illegible]	Mei Kin.	Ke Mei Kin.	Ke Kere Kin.
[illegible]	Kinsi Kere.	Ke Kinsi Kere.	—
[illegible]	"	"	—
[illegible]	"	"	—

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Relationship.	Kinship term.	Term of address.	Term of reference.
E.B.	—	—	—
W. Sen E.B.	Po Khyouk.	Ko Po Khyouk.	—
W. Jun. E.C.	Khwe Nak.	Ko Khwe Nak.	—
W. Jun. E.	Po Sen.	Ko Po Sen.	—
W. Sen E.C.	Khwe Nak.	Ko Khwe Nak.	—

(a) Myatat U Saho Rai insisted on the form I Kpa and similar forms for certain relatives as noted. (Kpa—Pa).

(b) The kinship term and term of reference was not distinguished by younger informants.

(c) The kinship term and term of reference was not distinguished by younger informants. Two Christian informants gave the term Mama in place of Kai and Bangkak. It is the Bengali and Assamese term for the M.B.

(d) No distinction was made by age.

(e) No distinction by age. Younger informants said that "Kai" was also used in place of "Ma".

(f) No difference according to sex of speaker. But some of the younger informants stated Hyouwe to be the kinship term in place of Bak and Kong for e.B. and e.S. and also M.S.E. and M.S.D. if older.

(g) The older informants gave these terms. Young men and women failed to distinguish between kinship terms and those of address occasionally.

(h) The husband and wife address each other as parents of the children.

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CHAPTER II

Descent, among Khasis, is counted through the mother; residence is also matrilocal. A woman lives with her mother from her birth until some time after her marriage. After one or two children have been born her husband may build for his family a house on the village land, in the village of the wife; this house becomes her property. The ancestral house goes to the youngest daughter. In the absence of a daughter the next youngest sister's youngest daughter becomes the heiress. Rarely, a man will take his wife to his mother's village. This case will be considered later.

A man is born, in the house of the mother's mother, or if the parents have built a separate house, in the house of his mother. He continues to live there until his marriage, when he generally goes to live in the wife's mother's house, whether it is in the same village or a different village.

The mystri U Sobo Rai married in the village of Mawphlang, where his mother also lived, and built the house, which is known as his house. It is, technically, the property of his wife Ka Shyrogh and will be inherited by Ka Dhaiboo, and thereafter, by Ka Elistima. The house of U Sobo Rai's mother, Ka Jin has been inherited by Ka Risibon, and will go in the next generation to Ka Pem. If the latter has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Drei and failing her heiress, to Ka Phre and then to Ka Lamih. If she has no issue, it will pass to her sister Ka Lasah and so on to Ka Lajer. If Ka Lajer has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Jem's family to her youngest daughter Ka Aibon. As she has only sons, the next heiress will be Ka Symon, and if she predeceases Ka Aibon or has no daughters, the girl Ka Risibon will inherit next. If

she does not have any daughter, the property will pass to the female descendants of sisters of Ka Long, as her elder sisters Ka Lasmon and Ka Laiban have left no daughters. It is therefore necessary to distinguish carefully between an elder and a younger sister, and also similarly between sisters of the mother. The generation of the women of the same house and extended family requires to be noted with care.

The youngest daughter and heiress is termed the Ka Khaddah. As Costin remarks the "Ka Khaddah is the custodian of the family property, not the full heir in the sense known to other systems of law, but a limited heir. She is responsible for the performance of religious ceremonies.....; she cremates her mother, and if she be Ka Khaddah of the whole family, she puts the bones of all members in their final resting place under the stone (mawbah) of the clan. The expenses of this ceremony are considerable and for this reason she gets a larger share of property, or in some cases a piece of family property in addition and apart from her separate share. Members of the family who are unable to earn for themselves and have no children to earn for them have the right of being fed at the ing-Khaddah" (house of the heiress).

The management of the property is however vested in the men of the family. The ancestral property of the family of myntri U Subu R...'s mother was under the management of U Joi, in his mother's life-time; then, on the death U Joi, the next brother U Doi became manager. After U Doi, the management came to U Subu Rai. After him, the authority will pass to U Hojen, as U Sumkurei is dead and then to U Nodrem. Any sons of Ka Pres and other sisters will not get any precedence over U Nodrem. As the senior U Kni of the Iangbiah Kur, U Subu Rai is also the manager of the common property of the Kur. This land has been leased out to various persons and the total income is divided among the different houses of the Kur. Whenever there is money to be distributed U Subu Rai calls together all the representatives of the Iangbiah houses and

divides equally. U Subu Rai explained that each house counted as a separate unit. Thus if Ka Jem, Ka Jin and all their daughters were alive, the married daughters who lived in a separate house, namely, Ka Laimon, Ka Laibon, Ka Aimon and Ka Hoiman of Ka Jem's house, and Ka Phre of Ka Jin's line, would each get a share. But Ka Jem and her Ka Khadduh Ka Aibon who lives in the mother's house would get only one share. So would Ka Jin, Ka Eiribon and the unmarried daughters of the latter. The descendants of Ka Lung would get seven equal shares for distribution to each house, and not two shares first, divided later into shares corresponding to the number of daughters for Ka Jem's and Ka Jin's house. The manager does not get any share of the collections. Authority in the management of the ancestral property therefore passes from one male to another, in the extended family, and the Kur, in a manner which necessitates a clear distinction of seniority and juniority of brothers, among themselves and also of sisters with regard to brothers.

The case of succession is similar. Gurdon notes that the Siemship in Mylliem State passes from a man to his next brother, and "failing such brothers, by the eldest of his sisters' sons; failing such nephews by the eldest of the sons of his sisters' daughters; failing such grand nephews by the eldest of the sons of his mother's sisters" and so forth in the female line. In Nongkrem, the son or similar male relative of the High Priestess becomes by delegation a Siem. The office of the High Priestess passes from a woman to her eldest surviving daughter; and failing daughters to the eldest daughter of her eldest daughter; failing daughters of her eldest daughter, to the eldest daughter of her second daughter, and so on. This is the customary line of succession, and is stated by Gurdon to be "uniform in all cases" practically.

Neither levirate, nor sororate are practised by the Khasis. Widows are stated (G) quite often not to remarry if there are daughters. There is no question of the control of the property

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587 of the woman by her husband. No occasion arises either of
421 taking his place on death, by his brother or by sister's son ; or of a sister of a deceased wife being made over to a man, as is the custom among Garos, where the husband of the heiress manages the property of his wife. Among the Khasis, the widow or widower cannot normally remarry before the end of a year after the death of the husband or wife. When a year is over, a payment is made to the Kur of the deceased to remove
587 the disability. If the man or woman want to remarry before
782 the year is out, a larger sum is paid. In Mawphlang, a sum of Rs. 5-4-0 is paid at the end of the year and Rs. 11-4-0 for untimely remarriage (within the year). The payment is made to the Ka Khadduh of the deceased in each case, and a ceremony severing the relation with the dead spouse is performed. A pig is purchased with the money and it is sacrificed in the house of the Ka Khadduh by a man—usually a neighbour. If the deceased was a man, the following invocation is made:
[539] "Ha kane ka mied la shim nong sang bad knia nong sang ia phi. Ka tnga uta uta ban ia khuid."

Free translation :—

"On this night the tabooed person is sacrificing to you. The wife of so-and-so (naming the man) is hereby made pure."

The pig is then killed by thrusting an iron spike through the shoulder. It is then cooked and eaten by the people present. This mode of killing is known as "dung."

The myntri Orongsing, whose genealogy has been noted, remarried a year after the death of his first wife Ka Resimai. This woman died two years ago, and the ceremony for removing the bar on remarriage was performed only last year. The money was made over to an old man U Ru, who is well acquainted with the rites. He purchased a pig and killed it by the "dung" method in the compound of Ka Resimai's mother, Ka Sheribon. The spike might be of wood or iron, stated U Ichon. I was informed by the myntri U Subu Rai that the ceremony of

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removal of the bar on remarriage was also of the same kind elsewhere in the neighbouring States. Clearly, the idea of leviration or sororation is incompatible with this idea of the marriage bond continuing even after death and necessitating a ceremony to break it. It may also be noted that while the Khasis permit divorce somewhat easily, remarriage is not permitted of either party "within the family of the divorced husband or wife" (G). A Khasi cannot also marry two sisters, although he can marry irregularly, more than one woman and also the wife's sister after the decease of the wife. We can now discuss why a woman or a man refers to the brothers and sisters of the husband or wife by the kinship terms used by the spouse, qualified by a special term. When a man marries and goes to live in the house of his wife's mother, he comes in contact with unmarried sisters of the wife. But he knows that they are sexually to be avoided. He lives in the wife's mother's house only during the life time of his wife. A wife's sister is comparable to a Kur sister sexually, during this period.

But his economic relations and religious ties require that a distinction should be made between these "sisters" and the "Kur sisters." The qualifying term supplies this requirement. The woman, on the other hand, has no direct relations with her husband's brothers. She has however to keep in touch with the husband's female relatives. The bones of the husband go over to the mother's house and eventually to the clan ossuary. The husband is also a potential manager of the property of his female relatives. She has therefore to take note of the order in age of her husband's sisters. As her husband uses the terms for sisters for the sisters-in-law, it is quite natural for her to extend such usage to her husband's sisters. The brothers of the husband do not count at all so far as the woman is concerned, and she will not therefore have any special term for them. As the sisters are referred to as Para Kynsi and Hymmen Kynsi, so will the brothers of the husband be referred to by similar terms. The absence of any sexual privileges between the woman and her

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husband's brothers fits in with such a terminology of kinship. It has not however determined the terminology.

We have referred to an exception in the case of kinship terms used by a man. His relation with his wife's brothers is quite different from that of a woman with the husband's sisters. The wife's brother is the manager of the wife's ancestral property; also this uncle has to be associated with important rites at birth and death of the children of the sister. Nevertheless, the husband has also his own position. The house that he sets up after marriage belongs to his wife no doubt; but he is the master there. As Gurdon states "It is he who faces the dangers of the jungles and risks his life for wife and children. In his wife's clan he occupies a very high place, he is second to none but U Kni, the maternal uncle, while in his own family circle a father and a husband is nearer to his children and wife than U Kni. The Khasi saying is "U Kpa uba lah ban iai, U Kni Uba tang ba ka Iap ka im" which may be translated freely as "The father bears the heat and burden of the day, the maternal uncle only comes when it is a question of life or death."

A man and his wife's brother represent the two aspects of the relationship which binds every man in Khasi society to his mother's house and to his wife's house.

Clearly, the two men, the sister's husband and the wife's brother, each have rights which are similar. Also they have close contact in many matters. Their relationship to each other is however distinct from that of brothers. Among the latter, authority depends on seniority. Between the S.H and the W.B, such a question does not arise. Each is in a position of authority, but in a different sphere. A special term is obviously needed to denote this special relation, which is reciprocal.

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CHAPTER III

It is evident from the discussions in the previous chapter, 601
that the children born in a house have to take note, as they grow 604
up, of the seniority and juniority among the sisters of the mothers, and also of the brothers of the mother. They have however very little relation with the brothers of the father, and we have to explain why the latter are classed with the father. This point will be discussed later. Here we may note that the relative lack of importance of the father's sisters has resulted in her not receiving distinction by age in the table of Kinship terms ; it is however indicated in address. Similarly the wife of the mother's brother is also not distinguished by age.

It may however be questioned why such a distinction by age is extended to the husband of the mother's sister. As noted before, a Khasi does not set up a separate house until one or two children are born. The children who are born in the house of [593] mother's mother, are looked after like mothers, not only by the progenitress but her sisters. While there would arise no question as to who is the actual mother, it would be normal for the children to call the mother and her sisters by the same term which would thus cover the women of that generation who live in that house. Each little child would find its mother's sister addressed as "mother" by its playmate and cousin. Hence he or she would also tend to extend the term to the mother's sister from the mother. Under such circumstances, the simplest mode of distinction would be to apply the term "mother" to the actual relation, and add qualifying adjectives for the sisters of the mother. The Khasis use for this purpose, quite appropriately, terms denoting seniority and juniority for reasons previously stated. Reciprocally, a woman uses the same terms for

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her children and sister's children, using an additional term for the latter, to make the distinction clear. The mother's brother's wife, and the father's sister live elsewhere, and cannot therefore share the same kinship term with the mother. The husbands of the mother's sisters are comparable to the father, as these males are all outsiders who have married the women of the house. The actual father "U Kpa" is the husband of the actual mother "Ka Kmie" and is clearly distinguished. The others are the husbands of the "Kmie San" and "Kmie Nah." Hence they are given the labels of "Kpah San" and "Kpa Nah" or "Kpa Khynnah." They derive their kinship terms denoting "father" through their wives who are called mothers by the children—not through any sexual rights on the wife's sisters. Such sexual rights, as noted before, have no existence. Hodson is not justified in ascribing this identity of kinship terms to alleged marriage rules and sexual rights which were operative in a hypothetical earlier type of Khasi society.

The mother's brother is important to the Khasi child, and has a special name, Ma, with an adjective such as Rangbah to indicate his position among his brothers. His relation with his sister's children is different from that of the mother's sister's husbands. It is more or less formal and ceremonial. A similar relative, on the father's side of the family, is the father's sister, though her position is not so important. Nevertheless, the two relatives are comparable. The mother's brother is in charge of the management of the mother's ancestral property and helps in performing important social ceremonies for the group. The father's sister is the repository of the bones of the father's family; in her is vested the preservation of the family religious traditions. Both these relatives live in houses separate from those of the nephews and nieces concerned and are, in a sense, of other households. Each of them was born in the natal house of one of the parents. They are therefore clearly distinguished from the father, the mother, the sisters of the mother and their husbands. But a common term, allowing

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for difference in sex, is applied to both. The corresponding uncle and aunt by marriage are referred to by terms which make this clear. The husband of the father's sister is a "Ma" like the mother's brother and is also referred to as "Kni." But as his position by age is unimportant, the adjective of position is lacking in his case. Similarly the mother's brother's wife and the father's sister have a common term "Nia"; but the latter has her relationship through the father clearly indicated by the additional term "Kha" which refers to kinship through a male. The mother's brother's wife is, on the contrary, an aunt by marriage. The husband of the father's sister derives his term through his wife; and the wife of the mother's brother, through her husband. The identities M.B. = F.S.H. and M.B.W. = F.S. are therefore derived indirectly and are not original. Hodson's hypothesis that they represent actual identity of kinship in an earlier dual society therefore turns out to be superfluous.

Reciprocally, a man refers to his sister's children by a term which is different from that for his own children. A woman also refers to her brother's children by this term which is different from that used for her own or her sister's children. As indicated, the M.B. as well as the F.S. are both on a parallel footing, and are practically labelled together, allowing for differences of sex.

We may say that there are, in Khasi society, two clearly recognised units. One of these is the house and household, where the men and women have been born. Inside this house group, the sisters have similar rights, actual as well as potential. As we have seen, on the death of one sister, where there is no female issue, another sister takes her place in continuing the traditional religious entity of the group. The brothers again, among themselves, take one another's place in succession, in the matter of authority, and of management of the family property. The other unit is that of the woman, her husband and the children. We may refer to it as the unit set up by marriage.

Referring to the first type, we may say that the second type results from the men of the house going out to marry women of other houses. As the men settle down in the wife's mother's house and later on set up a separate house on her land, the continuity of tradition in the house of birth is kept up by the women who remain behind.

It would however be a mistake to suppose that the bond between the members born in a house is severed on marriage. We have noted before that the bones of a dead man return eventually to his mother's house, for final deposition in the clan cinerary, or at least that of the extended household. The bond between the mother's brother and sister's children has also been noted as well as the authority exercised by the former over the extended family.

Further links between a man and his mother's Kur will appear from a study of the rules of inheritance and land tenure with regard to men. Any property that a man acquires before marriage belongs to his mother's house. Myntri U Subu Rai, for example, earned money before his marriage, and he purchased some land with this amount, in a village called Mawbeh. It will go to his sisters and their heiresses on his death. The earnings of a man after marriage, and after he has settled down in his wife's mother's house (or wife's house), among Khasis proper, generally go to the wife and daughters on death. But any gifts made by the parents at marriage have to be returned on death. Slmilarly, if a man has earned money after marriage, independently of his wife's capital, a part can be claimed on death by the man's mother's group.

Again, if a man returns to his mother's village after marriage, he can exercise his rights to cultivate the common land there. Every village community has its common land known as Ri Raid. As David Roy states (CN), "people can occupy a raid land where they build their houses and cultivate. For cultivation purposes land not more than can be cultivated is taken. The occupant can sell his house and the site and the garden of

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his house or paddy field or grove; but the sale does not extend to anything more than his right of occupancy.....Any site, garden or place of cultivation if abandoned, can be taken by another."

A son of a house of the village, of which the Kur is of the ancient settlers or has been given similar privileges, has the right of building a house, and of cultivating land in the Ri Raid. Reference has been made to the rare practice whereby a man brings his wife from her mother's house to his own village. In such a case he may set up a separate house on the community land, and cultivate some of it, to maintain his wife and children. The property will pass, on his death, to his daughters as usual. It will not go to his mother or sister.

(*a*) The man U Hariluk married twice, but did not settle down with his wife on either occasion. He built a house in Mawphlang which is his mother's ancestral village and brought each wife there. Both of them were divorced in turn and have left. If any of his wives had lived with him the house would have gone to his daughters. Now, however, the heiress is Ka Jrom, the daughter of a sister. [Genealogy I(*b*))].

(*b*) The woman Ka Lakimon is of the old Lyngdoh clan of Mawphlang. When U Lynsun married her, he set up a house in Mawphlang and cultivated land. But on his death, the woman went away to Shillong with her children, about 10-15 years ago, selling the house and abandoning the jhum land. The son U Bellestar has recently come to Mawphlang and is working in U Subu Rai's house. If he settles down, *i.e.*, marries and wants to set up a house, he can do so on the Ri Raid. (Genealogy IV).

(*c*) The foundress of the Khar Dumpep clan was a woman of the village Dumpep, and of clan Khar Dohling. She had two other sisters. One of the three sisters went to Mylliem, and another came to Mawphlang while the third remained at Dumpep as Ka Khadduh. The girl who went to Mylliem founded the Khar Sohnoh Kur and the girl who came to Mawphlang founded

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Khar Dunpep. These three clans—Khar Dohling, Khar Dumpep and Khar Sohnoh cannot intermarry on account of their common ancestry. U Alisson, the sister's husband of U Subu Rai is of Khar Dumpep clan and furnished me with the above details. He stated that his ancestress married a man of the old settler clans of Mawphlang and came to her husband's village. This man, being of the Khadar Kur, could build a house and cultivate land from the community holding. The property thus acquired passed to the daughters; and gradually the clan Khar Dumpep grew more numerous, and acquired rights in the Ri Raid like an old clan. [Genealogy I(*c*)].

(*d*) The family of the first wife of U Orongsing furnishes another illustration. The woman Ka Li came with her widowed mother from Cherra. The father had been a Synteng from Jowai. The girl has been married by U Ibchon, who is a member of one of the old settler clans. He has built a house for his family and made an excellent potato garden out of the common land for the maintenance of his wife and children. They will inherit it from him according to the usual Khasi mode. [Genealogy II(*c*)].

(*e*) U Roberts who is a Synteng of Jowai, and a Christian by religion (Genealogy V) came to Mawphlang in 1930-31 and after a couple of years married a non-Christian Khasi girl by Khasi rites thereby losing his membership of the church. He cultivated Ri Raid land when he stayed with his wife's mother Ka Shami [Genealogy V]. This woman is of Khar Sohno clan. One of her ancestresses, came to Mawphlang only a few generations ago, and married a man of the old clans. Her descendants have thereby obtained the privilege of cultivating Ri Raid. U Roberts has divorced his wife and no longer possesses this right. He now works as a tailor in the village, and lives with a friend near the bazaar.

(*f*) Gurdon has suggested that the large number of clans having Khar as the first part of the name of the Kur have originated from ancestresses who were carried off from the plains.

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While the traditions regarding the origin of Khar Dumpep and Khar Sohnoh collected by me do not support the view that the ancestress came necessarily from the plains, it is clear that they support Gurdon's hypothesis that those clans are derived from ancestresses who came from or settled in certain villages. It is evident that Gurdon's hypothesis implies that the husbands of these women, who brought them home from elsewhere, could clear land and transmit such property to their daughters, although the mother of the daughters did not own any land locally. This right to clear the Ri Raid is therefore not a recent innovation.

I have noted these details here as this aspect of inheritance from males has not been clarified elsewhere. It is not meant of course that this right to clear land extended to the special clan lands or family property matrilenial of the man. As noted before the Kni manages such land and makes over the income or produce to the women who are the owners. Even in such land, however, a man has some rights. Both Gurdon and Cantlie state that a male can adopt a blood relative of the same Kur if all the female members of the particular stock are dead. He himself holds the property for life only, when the women of the line are dead. On adopting a girl of the Kur, she becomes the keeper of the property and also his successor. But "the profits of his labours in the landed property can be used for his wife and children." The inherent right of the male is brought out to a certain extent in this rule also. Such private lands are known as Ri Kynti. It may be of the family or the clan. As an example of family land may be noted the case of the forest of U Nong Sohra, the husband of Ka Jem [Genealogy I(*a*)]. He cleared some Ri Raid land and planted pine trees there. Only the descendants of Ka Jem can cut trees in this forest which is now practically private property of this group. But the land is essentially Ri Raid in this sense that it cannot be alienated and when all trees have been cut away, any villager will be entitled to occupy it. The Khar Shiing Kur as a whole has true private lands near the village. If people of other clans want to cultivate

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it, they have to arrange with the U Kni, who is in this case U Babu of Mawphlang, elder brother of the Myntri, U Mama who represents this clan on the State organisation. Payment is made in money which is distributed to the different houses of the Kur. There is, however, Ri Kynti land of another kind, individual property which can be sold absolutely. It may be noted here that no rent is paid to the State or the British Government for the Ri Raid, Ri Kynti or other lands in Mawphlang, or in general in other Khasi States. The revenue of the State is derived from tolls levied on commodities sold in market places and also from fines and other minor sources.

The fundamental social and economic unit among Khasis is therefore the family house and the extended family associated with it; the Kur represents a later stage in its expansion. Marriage sets up new relations but does not disturb this basic structure of Khasi Society.

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CHAPTER IV

The Khasi marriage prohibitions may now be discussed in some detail. The rules regarding levirate and sororate have already been noted. The Khasi is also exogamous with regard to his Kur. This bar extends to clans derived from the same ancestry. A Khasi cannot also marry his father's brother's daughter, or his father's father's brother's daughter. He cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter so long as this uncle is alive but may do so after the death of this relative. He cannot also marry his father's sister's daughter so long as the father is alive but may marry her after the death of his father. Gurdon remarks that even then "such unions are looked upon with disfavour by Khasis. In the War country, such marriages are totally prohibited."

It has been noted in the previous chapter, that the basic unit of Khasi society is the house where the children are born and where the women stay all their lives and with which the men also are connected intimately even when they go elsewhere on marriage. It has also been observed that the authority is vested entirely in the men. The women have various rights not found in many patrilocal groups; but it would be a mistake to underestimate the position of the men in the house. The father is the head of his small family—the simple family consisting of himself, his wife and the children. He is also the person in authority over his sisters' households in matters affecting the extended family as opposed to the simple family. Although his own children, and the children born in his natal house are distinguished on account of their social and economic differentiation, nevertheless, they are, to a certain extent, both like children to

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582 602 him. His own brothers again, are to him his successors in the permanent rights, which are linked with the house of birth. Their bones all return to the common ossuary of thenatal house. 582 Apparently, this close association of the brothers with the house of birth is responsible for the rule that children of brothers cannot marry. If we formulate the prohibitions from the standpoint of the women, we can get a clear idea of their significance.

A Khasi woman cannot marry her father's brother's son; nor even the son of this cousin. Again, a Khasi woman cannot marry her father's sister's son during the life-time of her father; but may do so after his death. As we know, the father's death and return of the bones severs the link of the children and their mother with the father's house of birth. The women who safeguard and maintain the Khasi religious traditions, will thereafter raise no objection to the marriage of a woman of their house with the father's sister's son, who is now no longer closely related and is a man of another house merely. But the case is different with the other cross-cousin. A woman cannot marry her mother's brother's son, even after the death of that uncle, without incurring odium. In the War country, such a marriage is not permissible even after the uncle's death. We know that the relation with the mother's brother is not severed either at marriage or at death. The links are maintained even after death. His bones come back and rest in the ossuary of the house and the clan of his women relatives. The decease of this uncle does not therefore place his son in the category of a person with whom the formerly existing bond has been broken. We may sum up the distinction as follows :—

In the case of the father's sister's son, the death of the father breaks the link between a woman and her cousin in the other house, as neither of the parents of that male cousin were born in the house or extended family of the woman. In the case of the mother's brother's son, the father of that cousin is of the woman's own house and one with whom the bond endures even

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after death. In the first case the bones of the male cousin's parent will not rest in the ossuary of the girl's house. In the second case, the bones of one parent of the male cousn will rest there. 552

The restrictions on cross-cousin marriage, and the difference in the two cases, bring out the importance of the house of birth and of the women who preserve the continuity of the Khasi religious traditions in this house. From the women's standpoint, the bar on intermarriage of children of sisters is absolute. Their bones will rest in the same ossuary after death in every case. The limitations on marriage of cross-cousins, who are of different households are less strict, the degree depending on the closeness of the link with the house of birth of the woman concerned.

The prohibition of marriage of parallel cousins born of two brothers is based on a similar reason Stress is laid by men on the unity of brothers, just as the women stress the unity of sisters. The rights in property and common or practically common residence, and the custodianship of the 'religion' unite the latter. The authority and other rights already noted, unite the brothers in similar fashion. They also are in a sense guardians of the 'religion.' It is true that they marry in different households; but the bond that links them together and with the natal house is not broken thereby. We have seen that they retain the links and rights during life. Also, on death, they all return to the house of birth, in the repository of bones, and eventually are united with all men born in their house and the houses that have preceded it, in the same Kur. (This unity of the men and separation from the women is observed in the placing of the bones for the two sexes at every stage of the bone disposal rites.) Their children will therefore be linked always to this house through the bones of their fathers.

The recognition of the permanent bond linking the members of the natal house is, therefore, here also the important factor in prohibiting intermarriage between their children.

Hodson has suggested that the prohibition of marriage of parallel cousins was the result of an earlier dual stage of Khasi

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582 society. He states "In a dual society the children of two brothers are necessarily so closely related as to be unable to marry. This prohibition takes us straight to the dual days. It survives—because—if it does not directly promote—it does not impede the great social necessity which arises when a multiple society develops from a dual society, the necessity of giving wives to and getting wives from the new groups. The children of two brothers are called para Kha because they are kins on the male side."

The prohibition of marriage of a woman with the father's brother's son's son is ascribed to the necessity of prohibiting "a marriage which maintained and was maintained by the dual system." Hodson explains that under dual organisation and matrilineal descent a man's F.F.B.D. would be of the opposite moiety and married to a man classed as mother's brother. Among Garos a man married his mother's brother's widow and also her daughter under the nokrom system for control of property.[67] "Khasi custom definitely forbids a marriage which is the pivot of the Garo system which rests on the maintenance of the dual interest in the estate. This dual control would obviously be difficult to maintain against the pressure of competing groups which results from the development from a dual basis to a multiple basis." The rules regarding cross-cousin marriage are also ascribed by him to the break-up of the dual system. Hodson did not consider it necessary to distinguish the actual cross-cousin and mother's brother and father's sister from the classificatory kin of that status. He states that the distinction between the two kinds of cross-cousin marriage could not be drawn until "the dual system had ceased to operate, since so long as it flourished, the wife of the mother's brother would be the father's sister." His explanation of the prohibitions is that they "facilitate, may be intended to facilitate and may survive because they facilitate marriages with men of clans other than those of the two, to which the parents belong." Hodson fails to realise that there is no evidence of preferential mating of cross-cousins in the past,

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among Khasis. Even the Garos whom he cites apparently as representing a type of social organisation which the Khasis had earlier, do not encourage marriage with the father's sister's daughter. There is also no evidence that a Khasi ever married his mother's brother's widow. As I have shown earlier, the marriage prohibitions regarding cross-cousins can be explained on the basis of existing social and economic forces in Khasi society. The rule regarding exclusion of the F.B.Z.Z merely states that a woman cannot marry the son of her para Kha. It is not a new prohibition.

We may now state the reasons why a Khasi calls his father's brothers by the same term as father, and the wives of these uncles, as mother, using of course a qualifying term for seniority and juniority. As noted before, a Khasi boy or girl calls his mother's sister's children brothers and sisters. He avoids them strictly in marriage. They are not like cross-cousins, marriageable under certain circumstances. Any sexual approach towards them would have led in the old days to exile and also excommunication. The children of the father's brother are similarly excluded from the category of marriageable persons They are like brothers and sisters, and as such are addressed as Bah, Hep and Kong. They are referred to as Para Kha. As Hodson observes, the term Para conveys, when used as a prefix, the idea of having common rights or status. It also means, when used by itself, a younger brother or sister. The term Kha refers to relation (by birth) through a male. It is used for example in the combination Bah Kha, which denotes both varieties of cross-cousins, the children of the mother's brother, as well as the father's sister. A Khasi man (and) woman has already another set of parallel cousins who are sexually tabooed. Their parents are given terms denoting the father and mother, with certain modifications. As the children of the father's brothers are also sexually tabooed, it would be natural to extend to them the terms used for the parents of the other group of non-marriageable cousins.

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601 602 The close connection between the social structure of the Khasis and their kinship terms, is evidenced also in the case of the other relatives, by marriage. For a woman, the husband of the daughter is a son of another household, and is referred to by the term Pyrsa, used for persons of the generation below the speaker when they are of another house-unit. Her husband also follows the same rule. The son-in-law is not the son of one who is the potential successor of the speaker, in the natal house. But a distinction is necessary between the Pyrsa who is a nephew, and the son-in-law. This is furnished by the qualifying term Kurim. For the same reasons, the son's wife also gets the kinship term Pyrsa Kurim. We may expect that the reciprocal kinship terms, for the mother-in-law at least, looking at the matter from the house-unit view, will be denoted by a general term of this type. This general term ought to be applicable, with qualifications, to the reciprocal woman relative of the children who are termed Pyrsa, *i.e.*, to the father's siste. and mother's brother's wife. But the terms ordinarily used stress the relationship between the houses of these nephews and nieces and their aunts noted above. The terms Knia or Nia, and Kha have come from the relationship between the houses. This aspect of these terms has been discussed in an earlier chapter. Obviously an expression like Knia Kurim would not emphasise the fact that the mother-in-law was a woman of another household. The term Syngken is however used to denote the mother's brother's wife alternatively, and we find that the term Syngken Kurim is also used for a mother-in-law. Although the father's sister and the mother's brother's wife have certain common aspects, we note that only a woman related by marriage with a male relative of the previous generation is referred to by the term Syngken. Thus the wife of the father's brother is occasionally referred to as Syngken, apparently when she is not being thought of as the mother of a para Kha. The father's sister is naturally not termed Syngken. The usage is therefore comparable to the employment of the terms Pyrsa and

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Pyrsa Kurim, for the reciprocal relations. Normally, however, the mother-in-law is referred to by a separate special term which does not stress this aspect of the relation between the two persons.

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